

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### CROSS CURRENTS.

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#### CHAPTER XV.

ANY event, great or small, has a different significance for each human being whose life it touches; a comparison of such significances would be a rather curious study. Helen, when she heard of the Duchess's scheme, looked upon it as a special interposition of Providence, not for the relief of the Chinese, but to keep Selma from dwelling too much upon their last days together in the little house which had been home to them for so long. Everything was to be packed up before the wedding. Helen had carefully arranged that Selma should have no business connected with the move on her hands when she herself should be away; and she had been vaguely afraid that the last week, when the preparation for departure could no longer be kept in the background, might be very painful with the inevitable stir of old association which it involved. But Selma was just as usual, except for an added tenderness of manner towards her sister which every one of those last days seemed to increase. Such portions of the work as fell naturally to her, she did, just as she did everything not immediately connected with her profession, quietly, but quite uninterestedly. When Helen was obliged to consult her on any point, her opinion was given readily, and sympathetically, but as though her own personal concern in the matter was absolutely null.

The Duchess's scheme was not to be finally

arranged without incessant change of mind as to details on the part of almost every one concerned, and one question in particular—the question of what the play itself was to be—seemed almost insoluble. Selma heard little of the pros and cons, and had she heard everything she would not have known the truth—that John Tyrrell had made up his mind on the subject from the first, and was only waiting to declare it finally, and with authority, until his co-managers should be so hopelessly divided among themselves as to accept any decision in sheer desperation. Nothing was decided when the sisters' last day together drew to a close.

It was late, but the two girls were still together in the drawing-room. Everything was ready; nothing lay between them and their short parting on the next day but the night's rest, of which Helen looked very much in need; but Selma was lingering, and making her sister linger, as though the prospect of her lonely room was painful to her. When at last they rose, however, and Helen said:

"Let me come and sleep with you, Selma," she answered, rather hurriedly, "No, dear"; adding with a gentle touch on Helen's cheek: "We should only keep each other awake, and you are very tired."

Selma herself was very pale, and her eyes looked almost haggard. Since she came in from the theatre, she had been quietly drawing Helen on to speak of the wedding arrangements more fully than she had yet done, and her manner all the time had been rather unusual, as though she were putting some kind of deliberate force upon herself. And Helen, to whom, at this stage of the proceedings, it seemed far better that they should speak openly to one

another if Selma "didn't mind," had noticed nothing wrong until after her last hearty good-night kiss given in Selma's bedroom. As she left the room she turned, and was struck by something indefinably pathetic about Selma's face and figure as she stood watching her sister out. Helen hesitated a moment, and then, coming back, she took Selma into her arms as though she were still the little sister of her childhood, and kissed her with all her heart in the pressure.

"You don't feel as if you were being left alone, darling?" she said. "You don't feel as though you were losing me?"

Selma, who had trembled suddenly like a leaf, as she felt the touch of Helen's arms, drew a quick breath, and with a tender light in her eyes, which had been rather hard and set, returned the pressure which, until Helen spoke, she had only suffered.

"I know I'm not, my dearest!" she said. "Don't think of it like that. I know I shall have you always." She paused a moment, and then with a sudden tightening of her hold on Helen, she whispered: "You know, oh, Nell, you know how much I hope you will be happy. Oh, Nell! Oh, Nell!"

She was clinging to Helen with a convulsive grasp and pressure as the last words came from her in a dry, tearless sob; but before Helen, bewildered and startled, could fairly understand her words, she found herself pushed gently away with another rapid "good night," and the door was shut upon her. Helen stood for a moment, hesitating, and vaguely disturbed; then thinking, simply, that the fewer words and the less emotion indulged in the better, she acquiesced in Selma's unexpressed desire, and went to her own room hoping that her sister would "soon be asleep."

Humphrey and Helen were only to be away for a week, as the former was anxious about a picture for the Academy, and could spare no more time; and Selma was to spend that week with Miss Tyrrell. She was still very pale, and her eyes looked as though she had not slept much, when she was shown into the drawing-room at Kensington the next morning, and John Tyrrell, who was standing alone on the hearth-rug, apparently waiting for his sister, gave her a quick, keen glance as he shook hands.

"I've some news for you!" he said, as

soon as the usual preliminaries were over. "The knotty point is settled at last!"

"Oh!" cried Selma, the grave composure of her face suddenly giving way to an eager interest which had something pathetic about its intensity. "The play? Oh, tell me?" Then as he answered her her cheeks flushed crimson, and she cried, breathlessly: "Mr. Tyrrell, you don't mean it."

The play which Tyrrell had worked so cleverly that no one had any idea that it had been worked at all, was a translation of an old Italian play, which had taken his fancy as a much younger man, on the adaptation of which he had spent great pains, but which he had never produced for many reasons—one of which had been his inability to find any one to play the heroine; he insisted that she must be young, beautiful, and powerful; and his demands had never been fulfilled. He had several years before made Selma study the part, and on first hearing of the proposed *matinée*, he had determined that she should play it. The piece would be a grave risk as a regular production; but at a *matinée* it would be a certain sensation, if only because of its novelty.

"Bianca!" exclaimed Selma, as he signified, by a slight smile and a gesture, that he did mean it. "Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!"

"It will mean some hard work for us," he said. "Did I tell you that it is to be on the twenty-second?"

"I am so glad," she said, answering his first words. "Yes, it will. I was thinking about Bianca only the other day, thinking that I should like to study her again, now that I am—older." She paused a moment, and stood absently, leaning one arm against the mantelpiece. "It will be like a new part," she added, dreamily.

"It is a new part for me, too," he rejoined. "And I shall stage-manage it, of course. Fortunately, we play a great deal with one another, you and I, so we can rehearse to your heart's content."

Selma roused herself, and slipped into the nearest chair, forgetting in the interest of the subject that she had only just arrived, that she had not yet taken off her hat, or seen her hostess.

"Tell me about the cast," she said. "Who will be the Guido?"

There were two prominent men's parts in the play—two parts of which it was difficult to say that either was the better. One of these was a middle-aged man—a priest; the other a young man, Guido—

the lover. Either would have suited Tyrrell's style, and ten years ago he would certainly have chosen Guido. He had weighed the question carefully before deciding now, and he had been little influenced by the consideration of the respective ages of the two characters. Selma's simple question, taking it for granted that he himself would play the elder man, coming from her lips meant much more than she knew. He turned suddenly, and walked to the window, as he said:

"Bevan, I hope."

"Will he be good, do you think?" asked Selma, doubtfully, having little faith in the young man in question, and remembering that she had quite as much to do with Guido as with the priest.

"He will draw."

"I see!" said Selma, meekly, remembering that there was a charity concerned; and then the door opened, and Miss Tyrrell came in, saying, as she kissed Selma:

"You are discussing the *matinée*, I know. I'm afraid little Nora Glynn will never forgive you, Selma."

"Miss Glynn!" said Selma. "Why—oh, Mr. Tyrrell!—you asked her to play; and there's only Bianca. Oh, how dreadful!"

"I asked her to help," answered Tyrrell, with an inward wonder as to whether his sister would ever have the faintest notion as to what it was or was not desirable to say to Selma. "I asked her to help, and she is going to help."

"I am almost afraid she did not think you meant her to sell programmes!" observed Miss Tyrrell, sweetly.

"To sell programmes!" exclaimed Selma. "Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!"

"To sell programmes," assented Tyrrell, with the utmost placidity. "You are forgetting the Chinese, Selma. Nora Glynn, and a staff of similar young women"—he named half-a-dozen other pretty girls of about the same professional standing—"will make a great deal of money for them in that way. It was the Duchess's idea, and I think it is a very good one. They are quite charmed with it themselves."

Selma could not have given, in so many words, her own reasons for being anything but charmed; but something in Tyrrell's tone hurt her, and she was vaguely relieved when Miss Tyrrell led away from the subject by speaking to her brother of her plans for the afternoon.

During the week that followed, Miss Tyrrell was constantly "leading away" from the topic on which her brother and Selma seemed to her to talk incessantly—the *matinée*. It is doubtful whether she would have borne so much as she did, if the subject had not had for her a kind of background of Duchess and "society." That Selma should apparently have no idea in her head unconnected with Bianca; that she should sit silent and dreamy, to start and colour nervously when she was addressed; that she should spend the greater part of her time in her own room, or in Tyrrell's study, was no surprise to Miss Tyrrell. But it did surprise that sorely tried lady that it should be invariably her brother himself—her brother, who, as she expressed it to herself in more colloquial phrase than she would have used to any one else, "was not generally so horribly shoppy"—who introduced the subject, turning to Selma, as her eyes lighted, and her answer came, and discussing details with an interest nearly as keen, apparently, as her own.

There were no stage-rehearsals during that week, the cast not being as yet complete, somewhat to Selma's dismay; but she and Tyrrell rehearsed together every day—not only their own scenes, but her scenes with Guido, in which he was coaching her.

She dropped into a chair in the study one morning, when they had been hard at work for an hour and had broken off for a rest, and looked up at him as he stood by the fire, with thoughtful, admiring eyes.

"I don't think you've ever helped me so much over anything," she said. "And you make love so beautifully! I do wish you were going to play Guido."

He looked at her for a moment without answering. They had been rehearsing very earnestly, and the emotion and enthusiasm in her had touched the artist instinct in him, until he found himself actually moved in spite of himself.

"Do I, Selma?" he said. And then he moved; his face changed, and settled into its usual expression, and he sat down in one of his most characteristic attitudes. "Bevan will make love to you quite as well, you'll find," he said, lightly, but watching her keenly as he spoke. Selma shook her head vehemently, but her beautiful brows were drawn together in deep consideration of a bit of by-play he had suggested to her, and she did not

answer in words. "You've no idea how easily—those scenes come," he went on, bending a little forward as he spoke; and if Selma's thoughts had not all been pre-occupied, she must have been struck by his tone.

As it was, she hardly so much as heard his words, and exclaimed:

"I can't get it quite, Mr. Tyrrell. I see what you mean, but I don't feel as though I can do it. Will you try that first love-scene with me again?"

She moved as she spoke, as if she meant to begin again immediately; but he stopped her with a slight, deprecating movement of his hand.

"We will try love-scenes as often as you like," he said; and Selma caught only the banter in his voice. "But we need not rush back to rehearsal this instant. A little breathing space!"

Selma laughed, and sank back in her chair again with a gesture of resignation.

"Very well," she said. "Tell me, in the interval, whether I do at all what you want in that first act?"

Tyrrell leant suddenly back, with a movement which was almost impatience. Then he said, rather slowly:

"Selma, do you think always of what I want?"

"You know I do," she answered, quickly, meeting the eyes he had fixed on her face with her own almost horrified in their frankness and surprise. "You've not thought me careless? You've been so patient, and taken such pains—more than you've ever taken before, I think. Ah! don't you understand how grateful I am? Don't you understand?"

"I sometimes think that you don't understand," he answered; and his voice was unusually musical and persuasive. "You talk of being grateful to me! The pains I take for you are pleasures, Selma."

The anxiety died out of Selma's face before the grave, steady light which lit up her eyes as he spoke.

"You are so good!" she said, simply and gravely, as she stretched out her hand to him. "I think nothing helps me, when I get out of heart with myself, like the thought that you think me worth such trouble." He hardly touched her hand, and she went on, after a moment, with a slight return of anxiety in her voice and manner:

"There is nothing I care for so much as pleasing you."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I trust you so. I know that when I have pleased you I have done well." Then as if fearing that her earnest words might, for all their truth, be a little uncourteous, she continued, gently: "And even if it were not so it is the only little return I can make for all you do—for I can't look at it as you do—to try to please you." She paused, and turned her head away so that he could not see her face, and added in a tone that was very low, "I owe you—everything, Mr. Tyrrell."

There was no answer, and Selma, drifting on the current of her own thoughts, apparently returned to Bianca, and the complications surrounding her; her face was very pale and set, and she did not turn it to him again until Tyrrell, rising suddenly, said, almost harshly:

"There is one way in which you could please me, Selma, if you would try. Don't think of me only as your master."

"My master!" echoed Selma, recalling herself to the present with an effort, and smiling rather faintly. "Only my master! No, of course not! You are my oldest and kindest friend. Mr. Tyrrell, am I being very tiresome to-day? Let us begin to work again, and we shall feel more natural. Shall we begin with the Guido scene?"

She rose rather hurriedly, and eagerly held out both her hands to him that he might clasp them in the attitude in which the "Guido scene" began, and, with a sudden and complete change of look and manner, he took them in his own with the business-like touch of a rehearsal, and began his speech. But before he had finished it there was a deprecating knock at the door, and Miss Tyrrell appeared.

"Oh, how shocking of me!" she exclaimed, as her brother broke off, and looked towards her with an expression of countenance which was not to be described as angry, but the thought of which was generally sufficient to keep Miss Tyrrell from intruding when he was known to be at work.

"How can I show my penitence? I really thought you had finished—it is so nearly lunch time."

"Do you want to speak to me, Sybilla?"

"Well, it is Selma who is most concerned," replied Miss Tyrrell, suavely. "I was on my way upstairs, and I thought I would bring her this," holding up a square envelope. "It has just come, and it is the Duchess's writing."



Selma, finding herself expected to read the communication, whatever it might be, there and then, took it from Miss Tyrrell, thinking that Bianca was of more importance than the whole peerage. She tore the envelope hastily open, and drew out a card. "The Duchess of Ridedale at home, Wednesday, Feb. 17th. Music, 9.30," she read. "Thank you, Miss Tyrrell, very much. I'll answer it by-and-by. I needn't go, need I?" she added, glancing rather apprehensively from Miss Tyrrell's well-pleased face to Tyrrell's, which was not so easy to read. She was answered by a horrified exclamation from Miss Tyrrell to which she paid little attention, as Tyrrell said, quietly, "Why should you not go?"

"Because I don't want to," she answered, promptly; "I've so much to think about with Bianca, you know, and parties are so demoralising. I should have to think about a new dress, and it would all be a trouble. It can't matter to any one whether I go or not, can it? Besides," she added, simply, after a moment's pause, during which Miss Tyrrell failed to find words in which to express so strongly enough her conviction that it mattered very much to Selma herself, "besides, really, Mr. Tyrrell, I do dislike going out. People—people—I don't want to be affected, but people do talk so much nonsense, and I feel as if it might—it might confuse one if one heard it much. Oh, please don't think it's conceited of me," she finished, lifting a glowing face, and shy, earnest eyes to Tyrrell's face.

"My dear child——" began Miss Tyrrell, with the utmost emphasis; and then the luncheon-bell rang, and Tyrrell said, decisively: "There is no need to settle the question this moment. Selma can think it over a little more."

Selma, spending the afternoon with Miss Tyrrell, had little chance of thinking of anything else. But the effect on her of the discourses to which she apparently listened during the afternoon was so far from satisfactory, that John Tyrrell, coming in from his club at night—he never came from the theatre with Selma—found his sister waiting for him in the drawing-room, with a less artistic and amiable expression of countenance than usual.

"John," she began, "I assure you I have quite exhausted myself this afternoon."

"That seems a pity," returned her brother, drily.

"Dear Selma really has a very trying temperament," continued Miss Tyrrell, plaintively. "And I am afraid I have made absolutely no effect upon her. Unless you interfere, John, that girl will refuse the Duchess's invitation."

"How can I prevent that catastrophe?"

"You can talk to her," answered his sister, ignoring, with unusual wisdom, the sneer implied in his words.

"I have talked to her."

"And she will not be convinced? Then you must insist, John; you must——"

"We must let well alone," he interrupted, quietly. "Look here, Sybilla, insistence will do more harm than good. I am quite as anxious as you are that Selma should take her proper place in society; and I know quite as well as you do that the Duchess's invitation is as good a beginning as she could have; but she isn't ready, and it is not of the faintest use to hurry. If I ordered her to go to the Duchess's, she would go, no doubt"—there was an expression in his eyes as he spoke not pleasant to see—"but she would ruin her future chances—in all unconsciousness, but very effectually." He stopped a moment, and then went on again, more slowly: "There's no hurry, either. She can afford to wait. She is meant for better things, socially, than Nora Glynn, for instance; and there's no harm done by her waiting. Say no more to her about it, Sybilla."

And with this decree, which his sister dared neither dispute nor disobey, he wished her good night, and they separated.

With that night, Selma's stay with the Tyrrells came to an end. On the following day Helen and Humphrey were to come back, and Selma was to go home to them. Helen, anxious above all things that her sister should not feel herself an unnecessary third in their household, had written to her that they hoped to find her ready to receive them. They were to arrive at about four o'clock; and nearly an hour before that time, unpunctual Selma—determined that on this occasion, at least, she would not be late—was waiting alone in the new house.

She was very busy at first, arranging the flowers she had brought for Helen; and the strangely suggestive atmosphere of the carefully-prepared house, the curious familiarity and unfamiliarity of her surroundings, hardly touched her, while the servants—the same who had lived with

the sisters in their old house—were hovering excitedly about, anxious to give her all the help in their power. But when there was nothing further for them to do, and they had retired to watch surreptitiously for "the master and mistress," as they had startled Selma by calling Humphrey and Helen, Selma's face, as she stood alone in Helen's little drawing-room in the now quite silent house, touching and retouching her last glass of flowers, grew very sensitive and dreamy. It altered rapidly under the influence of her unconscious thoughts, until its expression changed from dreaminess to sadness. Her last flower had dropped from between her fingers; her face was very pale, and quivered slightly now and then; she was quite lost in thought, unconscious of herself or her surroundings, when an excited servant appeared precipitately at the door, and roused her with the words, "Master and missis is stopping at the door, miss." The next instant she had rushed downstairs on to the doorstep, and was clasped in Helen's arms.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Humphrey Cornish," she cried, gaily. "Humphrey, you are most welcome to your own house!"

The only shadow on Helen's perfect happiness, the fear that Selma might "feel it," as she expressed vaguely her sense of the painfulness of Selma's position, was dissipated by her manner; and as they went in arm-in-arm, closely followed by Humphrey, for whom his wife turned to look almost before she had taken two steps away from him, the beaming satisfaction on Mrs. Humphrey Cornish's pretty face was only to be equalled by the quiet satisfaction with which her husband answered her glance. There were sundry letters and papers waiting for them, and as they read them together, Selma having left Helen's side to stir the fire into a brighter blaze, they were as characteristic a specimen of a newly-married couple—in spite of Humphrey's undemonstrative demeanour—as could be seen.

"Now, dearest," said Helen, turning to Selma as she handed her last congratulatory letter to Humphrey with a laugh and a blush, "come over the house with me. Oh!" as her eyes suddenly fell upon a long cane-chair which had been one of their wedding presents, and in which a large silk cushion was now lying, "oh! what a lovely cushion! Where did it come from. Selma, you naughty girl, is it you?"

Selma shook her head, and examined it admiringly.

"No, indeed!" she said, "I don't know where it came from. Mary, do you know who brought this?" she added, turning with the cushion in her hands to the servant who was bringing in some tea.

"Yes, miss. Miss Cornish brought it this morning—Miss Sylvia, miss. She—she didn't come in—she hadn't time she said," the girl stammered, looking nervously at Selma in her fear of betraying that Sylvia had asked whether "Miss Malet" was expected, and only on hearing that she was expected immediately, had discovered her own great haste. "She left it for you, ma'am, with her best love," finished the girl, hurriedly, and left the room.

It was a little thing enough, but for the moment not one of the three could find anything to say. Selma, who had flushed crimson, put the cushion back slowly in its place, Helen, with a sudden rush of self-reproach at not having guessed the truth, and a painful prevision of the little, similar awkwardnesses which were so likely to arise incessantly in the future, glanced helplessly at Humphrey. It was he who said finally, "Didn't you say that Selma was to see nothing of the house until you came back, Nell? Suppose you go over it together now."

Helen had given Selma peremptory injunctions that she was to inspect nothing until she herself had returned, and they left the room together at once, eagerly seizing on the change of idea provided for them. The tour of inspection was begun with the deepest interest and deliberation on the part of the mistress of the house; but, before they had nearly finished, it became more and more cursory; and when she found herself for the second time in Selma's room, whither they had returned that its owner might admire its arrangements all over again, Helen's impatience could no longer be suppressed.

"I'm so glad you like it, dear," she said, giving her sister a hearty hug; "I hope you will be very happy in it. And now I think we've seen everything, and Humphrey will be rather lonely. I'm not sure either that he knows where his pipe is. I think we'll go down to him."

Selma laughed.

"Go down to him, Nell, by all means," she said; "I'm going to settle myself into my new domain. Go along!"

Helen retreated, hastily, after another loving hug, and Selma, left alone, listened

as the quick, brisk steps ran down the stairs, and heard the door of the studio open and shut again. Then she moved, and kneeling down by one of her port-manteaux, she moved her hand as if to take out her keys. But the next moment her face had fallen forward against the box as she knelt, and her low, choking sobs shook her from head to foot.

## A HANDFUL OF DAPHNE.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

HER hands were full of the sweet, pink flowers. It seemed as if the girl could never stop gathering. She was an English girl, this gatherer of the sweet daphne flowers, and never having been out of England before, she was full of a wild joy over the things she was always finding that were new and strange.

Was she picturesque? Scarcely.

The scene in which she stood was so. At her back, out to a far western horizon, the dome of blue sky, with its flying, wind-blown clouds canopied the vast grey-green waters of the Bay of Biscay, or, as it is locally called, La Golfe de Gascogne. So rocky was the shore that the height of the sandy cliffs and the stretch of rough, untended fields were not enough to hide up the dashing foam that sprang, and hissed, and roared about the giant rocks. White villas stood at various distances within sight; but the girl was a small speck of unmarked colour on the swelling, broken ground of those rough downs.

She stooped, too, nay, she was almost always on her knees, gathering the low-growing, half-hidden daphne.

She—her name was plain enough, Nance Burrell, and she, like five hundred or more English people, had been at Biarritz all the winter—she had been one of a party of five young folks who had started on that April afternoon for a hill walk, flower-hunting.

Where the four were no man could say. Nance had forgotten them, and was lost among the daphne flowers.

Suddenly a spluttering rain-shower burst upon her. She stood erect, a trim figure, neat as an English girl would be, but with wind-blown, yellow hair—the human point of a wild landscape.

"Ralph!—John! where are you? Shame! leaving me like this, alone. Holà—là—là!" Her voice rang out like a clarion.

There came no answer. Desolation was around her; no culture, no human sign.

She made for the shelter of the hedge, by a corner of which she had climbed up daphne-hunting. There was mud beneath it by this time, and Nance slipped.]

"Bother!" she cried.

An answer then did come.

"Mademoiselle!"

The speaker was a French gentleman, wearing the blue cap of the Basque peasants.

"I must have my flowers!" Nance said, helplessly, as, covered with mud, she looked down on the fallen daphne.

"Are they not spoiled?" he asked. "Besides, there will be plenty more to-morrow, when the sun shines, and mademoiselle will get wet."

All was said in as correct English as if an Englishman had spoken, with the exception, of course, of the accent.

"Have you seen them?" Nance asked, inconsequently. "My friends, I mean."

"No. Spring," he said, "I will keep you safe. No; we have met no one English, I think. Have we, *Rénée*?"

By this time Nance was safe on the path, and saw two other people, who were sheltering and perfectly dry under the stoop of the high bank and hedge.

One was a small, brown, chestnut-haired girl, the ideal of a bright and pretty French girl—she was the *Rénée* addressed. She only shook her head and laughed.

"Papa, papa!" she cried, and her gay laugh rang on.

The second person was a young man, and he answered in French that they had met no one.

"But you will shelter with us, mademoiselle," the elder gentleman said. "We are quite dry here, and these showers do not last."

She most assuredly could not go, on through that falling deluge; so Nance, who was a bright, good-tempered girl, laughed over her difficulties, and wedged herself against the dry bank by the side of the girl spoken to as *Rénée*.

The young man, who was Monsieur de Saure's nephew, and consequently the girl's cousin, gave up his place, each man taking an outer edge, and keeping the girls well sheltered.

In a quarter of an hour many things may be done. At the end of this quarter of an hour all these four were comfortably talking together. They might have known each other for months.

Nance gave the information that they "were going home in May, and I am sorry."

"And we have been here one wik," Rénée said, in English. "I spik English vairy well—yes."

The two girls rattled on, as girls do. They learnt the name of each other's hôtel, and found that they were near together, and planned visits amid a rush of compliments from Rénée's gay tongue.

"We will walk home together."

"Yes; but my daphne! I have lost nearly all!"

"I will gather more," Etienne began.

"We will all gather more, to-morrow, when there is no rain," his cousin said. "We will come together. We are friends; is it not so?"

"Of course. My friend—mine," said Nance, "you will not go to the others, mind!"

At breakfast the next morning a bunch of daphne was brought to Nance.

"Who from?"

"Monsieur did not give his name," the waiter answered.

"Oh! it's the cousin." Nance was blushing a little—a very little—but had a perfectly cool and possessed manner. "Say I am much obliged."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders and bowed.

"Monsieur does not wait," he said.

"Well," and Nance surveyed her flowers, and poked her small nose into them—"very polite, of course. I should like to know which of you boys would have done as much," with a glance of sisterly scorn at her brothers.

"You are mighty grand. It is as good as telling you they do not want you out with them, this morning. We shouldn't have done that, anyhow," John retorted.

"I do not see that, at all. Time will prove."

Time did prove, for Rénée de Saure ran in soon after—the respective mothers having met on the Plage after the rain of the day before, the families were formally introduced—and the excursion duly came off.

Rénée evidently knew nothing of Etienne's gift of the bunch of daphne, and Nance's brothers kept silence.

They gathered more; but Nance carried hers off to her own room, flaunting the bunch in the eyes of her jeering brothers, in this way losing her head, and setting

up a grand show of gay ridicule on her own part.

"Shall I not keep a piece to my dying day? Of course, I will; and show it to my grandchildren in evidence of the conquests of my youth. No, I think I'll be taken ill, and have a sprig of it buried with me!"

Very fine. She kept it quite separate, however, from any other flowers, and where its last dead bits went no man ever knew.

It was spring, and the dead season at Biarritz, for the English people who crowd there for the winter were moving homewards, and such as were left were mostly of the steady, humdrum, family sort. The French and Spanish gaiety of the summer, when all the lovely Parisian toilets are displayed, had not begun. No bands were playing—bands are not supposed needful for English folks—no promenading under the sweet strains of the last opéra bouffe could be had for love or money, unless, indeed, you made one of the "people" at the Sunday performance in the Place Eugénie. Then, of late, indeed, if you had music you also had blustering wind or splashing rain. And fancy English people going out in the sunny South for that!

Rénée de Saure was not carried off then by any crowd of compatriots, but walked with her English friends, or rode with them, or went driving in processions of the tiny carriages beloved of Biarritz visitors.

Rénée and Etienne were but two, but there were six Burrells, so in these very mad excursions, in which to race made half the fun, the pairing got diversified.

Bayonne fair was going on, so one day they drove off to see it.

It was a real summer day, a fête day, too, and crowds went to the "Foire."

There was the splendid roundabout with peasant girls coiffed in kerchiefs of many colours, peasant lads blue-capped, straight-nosed—a giddy whirl.

"I vote we all have a ride!" Ralph Burrell said, but scarcely meaning it.

"Is that what you say? We will ride on ze yellow horses. That would be funny!" and Rénée was infected with the general wildness.

"Are you mad?" Alice Burrell objected.

"Il—il ne le permettrait!" pointing to Ralph. "Lui—il est tyran—tyrant—c'est ça!" And a point of the finger at the "c'est ça!" gave emphasis.



Nance brought a new suggestion.

"I should like to go and see the lions and the girl in their cage."

"Then you will go alone!" Alice answered.

Here was another scene—a peasant was holding back from something.

"No! no!" she cried.

"She has no fun in her, that Louise—she hoards her sous. The miser!"

"I'm not a miser!"

A young man, a man with a strangely beautiful face, calm, and still, and strong, and wholly like a bronzed copy of a Greek statue—how did that type get to the western shores of France?—bent and whispered in the girl's ear.

"Never—never, Paul Léro!"

He had asked if he might pay for her.

"Montez, montez, mesdames et messieurs! Nous commerçons tout de suite. Montez, je vous prie!" a fat woman on the steps of the Arab dancers' show was calling out.

Nance and Etienne heard. "How will that end?" Nance asked.

"He will pay."

"Not at all. She has paid. Brava! Louise! But—what a handsome man!"

"I did not notice!" In truth, Etienne's eyes were that afternoon only for Nance.

Nance was semi-boyish in her dress, un-French-like, and so beyond her gay self that she caught the young man's fancy.

But Etienne was bound—he and his cousin René had been bound by their respective parents when René was in her cradle. They were to be married in six months, so what was Etienne the lover thinking of?

Until the day of the daphne-finding he had been a true lover; but, then, as René had made English friends, so he had made the same. Here was a fine consequence!

An old Bayonnaise in black head-gear came along, dragging a child for a ticket in the lottery. She was shouting at the top of her voice, holding aloft her sous. Then some soldiers came, then a smart lady from a shop, and so on.

Rumbling low, and making a bass background, there was heard the roar of the lions in the menagerie, and the shorter snarls and yelps of the other beasts.

"I hate the sound of those creatures," Nance said. "I always think they will be breaking loose."

The young man smiled, as any man would smile, loftily, over such a purely feminine fear.

"It is an unpleasant idea, mademoiselle," he said. "Do not suggest it."

"Oh, I know it could not be. And yet—" Nance set her pretty, fair head on one side, and said: "It might be—just might be."

"That is so." Young De Saure shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly. "But the possible is not always the probable, mademoiselle."

How much further the subject might have been carried one knows not, for there came a cry, a shout, and then a rush of people from behind.

Nance was pushed to right and left, and her companion lifted his lithe, nervous arms to keep off the crowd.

"Le lion! Le lion!"

"There is a creature out." And Nance stood still and white. She did not faint or scream; no, the screams were all behind her.

"Nonsense!" Etienne answered; and his arm was round and he was trying to drag her through the furiously-thickening mass of people. "It is not true!" he called out.

"It is the bear!" a frightened girl answered. "Did I not see him come over the barricade myself?"

"No, you did not, Justine; what you saw was the camel going to lie down. You girls are foolish," Justine's blue-capped brother answered.

"Le lion! Le lion!" came again from behind; and another surge of the rushing crowd fairly lifted Nance off her feet, but only wedged her more tightly.

"It is true," she said. But somehow she felt safe, and, as people do in great emergencies, nervously laughed, and her tongue rattled out the foolish joke: "He cannot eat us all, thank goodness! there are a few behind."

Etienne looked over the heads of a good many, and he saw René and Ralph, and behind them Alice and the other boys. He never thought of his own position; he flushed hotly as he saw the calm Ralph elbow his muscular self sideways, and with small René sheltered within the wall his arms made, convey her to the break between one stall and its neighbour.

Rénee to allow that!

Rénee was his—Etienne's—property; was she to allow another man's arms to guard her?

What though the arms made but a cage, and no embrace at all? They were arms,

and she was Rénée, his—Etienne's—fiancée.

What of Rénée herself?

Her brown head was lifted as high as she could lift it, and her round, merry, brown eyes were alight with fear. At least, they had been so, for she verily believed the lion was loose, and she had given two or three sharp little screams as evidence of that belief.

Fear, though, was not in her eyes after she saw Etienne.

Those bright, brown eyes were too sharp, too sharp. They saw something, and they imagined a great deal more.

Then the colour went from her brown cheeks, and Ralph really had to carry her through the wedge of that passage-way between the stalls.

He set her down on the strip of trodden, dirty grass behind, stretched himself, as a young giant might do, took off his straw hat, and looked round. Then, having nothing better to say or to do, he laughed, and said:

"Well, we are alive. We are not eaten?"

"That is true!" Small Rénée was like an indignant queen, and drew herself up. The next moment her instinct of gracious politeness helped her to master herself. "And you have saved me, monsieur. I thank you very much. But also I will not wish to wait here for the lion; let us run. Run!"

And she suited the action to the words.

The roaring and shouting of the crowd was fainter by distance, for these two were very soon in the region of the shops, where they soon found Alice and the boys, and by-and-by there sauntered out from another street Etienne and Nance.

"Where is the lion?" Nance shouted, wild and gay.

"Having his déjeuner!" Rénée answered as gaily, but with an angry sparkle in those pretty brown eyes of hers.

"Well, I vote for going home as fast as we can," put in Alice the practical. "I have no mind to assist at that déjeuner."

"There is the train going. We must wait half an hour now," John said. "Come and have some tea. I know a shop."

"It is tempting Providence."

A string of blue-capped youths ran by, shouting and laughing, as is the manner of hobbledehoyes of all nations.

Ralph, the giant, caught one by the arm.

"What's up?" he asked in plain English.

The boy mimicked.

"Le lion! le lion!" he shouted.

"I'll shake the breath out of your giggling body if you don't answer. Is the lion safe?"

A guffaw answered.

"Le fou!"

Who the word was meant for he did not show, for a violent shake administered by Ralph stopped any more words.

A grey old sailor came up.

"Don't kill the creature, monsieur, though I'd like to do it myself. He's the boy who set the whole thing going. A monkey got loose—and is loose now for that matter—and that young wretch shouted 'Le lion!' Ugh, you Jacques Pinon! you'll be in prison before long."

"H'm, will I? But you'll not be the judge, though," and the boy flicked his fingers in the old man's face, and by a jerk got himself free from Ralph.

They were a lively party over tea. Nance was wild, as was her custom very often, and would have Etienne sit by her and serve her.

Etienne was politeness itself, and seemed to find great pleasure in his politeness.

Rénée was gay; but then she, likewise, could be always charmingly gay. There was a little more noise in her laugh, perhaps, than custom usually gave to it; but Alice and the boys were so hoydenish that Rénée's drop from her pretty grace was not so much noticed. She slipped her little hand softly within Alice's arm.

"I shall be independent. I shall act à l'Anglaise. That is what you admire, mon ami!"

Rénée's eyes were not dancing with fun.

Etienne was walking by the side of Nance, simply because Nance would walk by him.

It appeared a gay party going back to Biarritz on the tram-cars; but—is there not a second side to everything?

"Monsieur, come with us and fetch the book Rénée wants," Nance said, when they reached Biarritz.

"I will haf no time to read ze book, mademoiselle—not zis evening. No, mademoiselle; adieu, mademoiselle," and Rénée ran in.

"Au revoir, ma chérie," Nance answered.

The girl was gay at seeing she could tease Rénée.

Three days passed. Rénée had a cold.

"Not much," Madame de Saure said, coolly. "It is only a migraine—it will pass." But as one can easily drop a shot into the most trite speeches, she said, after a while, that "Rénée has been too gay;" "she is generally only with me or with her father;" "the kindness of les demoiselles Anglaises has made her fancy she can act like them, and, madame, you know"—with the politest shrug of the shoulders—"that is impossible, you know, for a Française."

Mrs. Burrell, being British in her sentiments to the backbone, rather bridled at this, without in the least knowing why. The difference in the up-bringing of young French girls and English girls, she never had had the least cognisance of. She understood this much, that for some reason the ways of Nance and Alice were not considered the right ways for Rénée.

So the intimacy faded.

Rénée de Saure did not go out, Etienne's visits fell off, English people began to leave Biarritz, and the date became fixed for the Burrells to go.

More than a week passed after this, and though Rénée was out again and though the two families had all along been gracious to each other in a pleasantly-formal way, each was too proud to make a spoken reason of offence; yet the first free-and-easy intercourse did not return.

Etienne, one day, went to say good-bye. He was being sent to Paris by his uncle on business.

"But how absurd!" Nance cried. "Why go on Wednesday? We go on Friday. We might travel together."

"The affairs are important; but——"

Etienne went back.

He was saying to his uncle that the Burrells travelled also to Paris; but—on the Friday.

"Go with them," said Rénée, who was present. "Much more agreeable than to travel alone."

"You took those papers, Etienne?" his uncle asked.

"No; they were on your table."

"Ha, I will fetch them. You had better have them at once."

He left the room.

"They have asked you to travel with them!" Rénée asked.

"Yes, they did. But I knew the affairs could not wait."

"Bah—the affairs?"

"Besides——"

"There is no 'besides.' Do I not know what you mean? Do I not know and see the liberty of those English girls? Will I not be free, too?"

"Rénée!"

"Ah! si! mon ami! I know what I speak of, and I, too, will be free like those English girls, and you shall be free, too. We will not be tied by the old régime. The world has new ways!"

"Rénée! how long have you thought this?"

"Ages! Ages! in my dreams." She laughed and shrugged her shoulders, and threw out her dimpled hands, palms upwards. "Did not Louise Thorot do what I do? Did not Virginie de Lisle choose for herself?"

"Both have married Englishmen. How could it be helped? But, if you wish it, you must be free. I will speak to uncle."

"And go to Bayonne for a day or two, and meet the train on Friday. Adieu, mon ami! It is easy."

"Rénée, I do not understand."

"But I do."

Then she walked out of the room quite quietly and steadily. How dignified these little women can be!

How Etienne managed the very uncomfortable conversation with M. de Saure we do not pretend to say. He left Biarritz.

Soon the English season was over, and French and Spaniards filled Biarritz.

Her mother said that some distraction must be found for "la petite"; she would become "dévoté." A "mariage manqué" makes a girl triste.

The gay Spaniards made that distraction.

Autumn came, and M. de Saure would stay no longer. The family went home to Fontainebleau.

And what of Etienne?

Of course, he had not been seen. What had he done? In truth, he was as much Rénée's lover as ever; if at first the marriage had been arranged, in the end surely he had become a true specimen of "young France," and he had chosen—chosen Rénée.

Soon, very soon, he would speak. He would go to Fontainebleau and meet Rénée unawares.

The long afternoon shadows showed that the grand autumn day was closing in. Rénée was out in the old garden with her

dog. The dog was amusing himself by basking in the last broad belt of sunshine under the great trees; Rénée was sitting by the fountain, whose chipped, broken edge told how old it was.

Was she thinking of the past generations of De Saures; of the many young and old Rénées, who doubtless had sat upon the stone bench where she was?

César, the dog, uncurred himself, wagged his tail, gave a short bark, and stood alert. What had he heard?

Rénée had heard nothing.

No; but the ears of a dog are quick. César had heard a step he knew enter by the gate at the end of the avenue of plane-trees.

Rénée's back was turned towards that direction, and her musings were so deep, that she did not hear a step that had left the gravel drive, and came softly on over the turf and the fallen brown leaves.

Another sharper and louder bark roused her.

Etienne, her cousin, stood behind her. She turned quickly, the colour in her pretty cheeks rose, and her eyes lightened with gladness. Impulse did this, then; being a maiden of some force of character, she ruled herself to command her eyes into calmness.

"Ha! you have come!" she said, coolly, and she held out her hand in greeting. "Why did you not write?"

"Because—— I scarcely know why. I think I hoped to find you alone; and then——"

"Then?" she repeated.

But she did not again sit down, and made a little movement as if she would take him to the house.

"Rénée—you know why I come." His face was grave, and he stood so firmly and so determinedly that the girl's advancing footstep was obliged to linger. "You know what I wish to follow that 'then.'"

"Do I? Scarcely. I really think not." She was too provokingly cool, and would not look at him.

"Rénée—you know well. Look at me," and as he spoke he quietly took her two hands in his, and drew her towards him.

"Non—non!"

But though she cried out her refusal, she at the same time obeyed, and her eyes lifted to his. For one second they were angry brown eyes; then they shadowed, and next they shone under a rush of tears.

"Ob, Etienne!"

That was just a gasp, and, with her hands held prisoners, she hid her tears on his breast.

By-and-by, César was again curled up on Etienne's feet, and the two, lovers again, were sitting on the old stone bench.

Rénée's sweet eyes had the shine of the glad tears in them still, and yet she was laughing.

"I was right—yes! I declare always that I was right."

"I do not see it—if we had kept to the old ways we should both have been spared a good many months of discomfort and misery. At least, I should."

She tossed her head gaily.

"It has been good for you, and if you want to have much to say to me you will have to follow the new ideas. Women think for themselves, and I am a woman. I also choose for myself—are you pleased?"

She put her dimpled hand within his, and laughed again.

## A RAMBLE ON THE SOUTH-WEST SHORE.

THE sea gleams hazily in the distance, and breaks in sparkling wavelets at our feet, sea-birds float placidly on the gentle undulations, divers and sea-mews, and some long-necked cormorant from the neighbouring cliffs.

There has been a slight frost on shore, but the morning breath of the sea is fresh and free from bitterness. Light vapours curl over the water, and obscure the distant prospect; but here a white cliff or a white sail reveals itself for a moment, and there a dark headland looms shadow-like in the distance.

Our starting-point is Southbourne-on-Sea, of which a few scattered houses peer over the cliff behind us, and the headland that looms in the distance is known as Hengistbury, and is named, so it is said, after the famous Saxon chieftain, who bore the white horse as his totem or symbol.

It is pleasant walking on the firm, moist sand left bare by the receding tide; but the sea works double tides in these parts, and high water succeeds low with marvellous rapidity. There is something startling to the uninitiated visitor when he sees one advancing tide succeeding the other after an interval of only a few hours, and though he may be reas-



sured by the fisherman's account of the phenomenon, that "'twas always so," he will perhaps fail to obtain any convincing scientific explanation. But the immediate result of this freak of nature is to drive us upon the shingle, which is not pleasant walking, so the best plan is to scale the cliff by one of the steep but practicable paths used perhaps by smugglers in days gone by.

If smugglers are scarce, there are still plenty of Coastguardsmen. Their station, with the tall flagstaff, the low-roofed buildings, and the neat garden plots, is in full view now that we have reached the top of the cliff, while directly in our path rises a substantial post, crowned at this moment by the figure of a Coastguard, who is planting there a red flag, which indicates some kind of caution to passers by.

Now the meaning of the red flag, as the preventive man civilly explains, is that the Coastguardsmen are turning out for rocket practice, and as rockets, even of the life-saving class, are awkward customers to meet, and at times erratic in their flight, it is advisable to give them a wide berth.

Beyond here the cliff rises gradually towards the headland of Hengistbury, and the broken heights of that famous promontory will afford a capital point of observation. So far, the furzy edge of the cliff has been bordered by wide open fields, in the corner of one of which stands the travelling-van that contains the rocket-apparatus used in shipwrecks, and the cultivated land extends to the margin of a huge prehistoric fortification that defends the headland from approach on the landward side. The place bears the name of the Double Dykes, and double they are, two huge parallel ramparts, with an artificial ditch between.

All the surroundings point to this spot as an ancient stronghold of great strength and importance, and the tradition that associates the name of Hengist, the great Saxon chief, with this striking headland, is not to be rashly disregarded. Probably, like most Viking chiefs, Hengist died fighting, and likely enough in defending this very line of ramparts. A tumulus that still exists on the headland may be actually the tomb of Hengist. He was not very successful in the West, as the most ancient history we have—that of Nennius—tells us how Hengist's son after his death retired to Kent, and founded the line of Kings of that ilk. He may have sailed from this very point, the young

Viking, after fighting his way to his ships, while the Britons swarmed in over the deserted ramparts, and shouted curses and maledictions at the retreating foes.

But the secret of such famous well-defended winter quarters—with their warm, sunny exposure, and the sloping shore upon which the ships could be safely hauled up for the season of ice and snow—would be handed down from one generation of sea-rovers to another. Here was a Danish stronghold, doubtless, in later centuries, when the Northmen plundered Christchurch, and harried the neighbouring lands. And many a fierce battle has been fought over these great earthworks, of which no record remains, except a cluster of bones here and there turned up in the adjoining fields. But as we sit on the scarred side of the great berg, some faint echo of the tramping and shouting of contending hosts seems to reach the ears,

Dim clarions awake and faintly bruit,  
Where long ago a giant battle was.

Further reflections are cut short by the sight of a serpentine train of fire and smoke roaring and hissing through the air. The rocket brigade are at work, and have fired their trial shot over the sea. The sight suggests storms and shipwrecks, of which this coast has had its share. Yonder in the furthest haze, where far out at sea the uttermost headland shows like some monster saurian swimming deep down in the water, is Dunster Head, which many a stout ship has struggled in vain to weather, and gone hopelessly to destruction against the cruel cliffs. Such was the fate of the "Halsewell," East Indiaman, outward bound, with two hundred and forty souls on board, which, after wallowing helpless and water-logged in the channel for weary days and nights, struck on that inhospitable coast one dark and stormy night.

But the Coastguard detachment, satisfied with their one trial shot, have limbered up and are marching off to parts unknown. And now to work across the Head, where, at the highest points, are mosses and lichens flourishing in profusion. And down below is a gully, where high tides have left a deposit of mud and slime, while great slabs of red, rusty-looking stones stick up here and there. And this, if you please, is, or was, an iron mine. An iron mine in Hampshire! But it is only a little one, and has been unworked for some time.

A rapid descent brings us to a stretch of sandy hummocks, where on one side storms and tempests have scattered seaweed, wreck, and wreckage; and on the other the swollen rivers have left their contributions, too. A happy-looking case-bottle suggests rum, but turns out to be sheep-wash. An old boat or two lies yawning as to its timbers among the tufts of wiry bent grass. In the broad, shallow lagoon, with its winding channel marked out with pine boughs, trim little yachts lie moored, together with dumpy-looking boats of the fisher class. The opposite shore is fringed with coppices, and neat, white houses shining among the trees, and all is as quiet and still as can be. But a little further on we come upon a scene full of life and animation.

It is the harbour mouth, a narrow, swift channel between sandy shores. On this side a cottage or two, and rows of stakes for drying nets; the other shore, embanked by rude piles and dark, weather-stained boards, and a crazy, wooden stair for landing, shows a rough, picturesque group of houses, some with the trace of ancient dignity about them, all isolated from the rest of the world on this lonely spit of sand; a true fishing settlement, the inhabitants of which may have dwelt there in continued succession from the days of the Vikings. The name of the place, Mudiford, suggests the association. It has nothing to do with a ford for crossing; but represents the Norse fiord, or inlet, so that in this way, as well as in dyke and graveyard, the old sea rovers have left their mark upon the coast.

Busy enough are their descendants this breezy morning. Boat after boat puts forth from the sloping shore on this side of the channel, each with one stout rower on board, and a long seine net carefully piled in the stern. A man on shore holds the head rope of the net, as the boatman pulls as for dear life almost to the rude staging on the other side, while the net is shot out across the channel, the well-weighted lower edge falling quickly to the bottom, while the great disks of cork that support the upper edge float swiftly down in a graceful curve between the boat and man on shore, who, with the rope over his shoulder, hurries along with the stream. There seems no end to the nets and boats which, at due intervals, follow each other down the channel; and then it is seen that, as in a stage army, the same performers reappear again and again in the procession.

But for a better view of the proceedings we must cross the channel. Men and boats are too busy to be disturbed; but here are two lads, too young to help in the fishing, and a boat that has retired from active service by reason of age and infirmities. The heads of the boys hardly appear above the gunwales; but they are smart little fellows, who know how to handle a boat, and after a short and sturdy struggle with the tide, they land us safely by the crazy wooden stairs. And now for the point of sandy shore that lies opposite the strand where the fishermen haul ashore their nets, just where sea and river meet.

Our man in the boat has by this time reached the shore, on the side he started from, but considerably lower down. The man with the rope was there as soon, and the boatman landing with his end of the net, after throwing a big stone or two into the water, either for luck, or to scare back any fish that might think to slink away between the net and the shore, each man hauls away at his end; the net comes merrily in—too merrily, indeed, for when the bight of it is finally hauled on shore, there is nothing in it but some seaweed and small crabs. And now the net is piled in the boat again, and the shore-hand takes the tow-rope over his shoulder, and tows the boat up the channel again. The boat meets the floats—other nets which are floating down in like manner—but passes easily over them; and when the upper station is reached, the business is all to begin again.

And so boat after boat, and net after net come sweeping down the tideway, but never the ghost of a fin among them. The interest is beginning to flag, and a ramble of a day or two previous is recalled, when, from the parapet of an old bridge over the River Stour, a few miles above the present scene, we watched some river fishermen, with boat and net, sweeping a deep pool below. Result: an old tin can, and a decayed cabbage-stalk!

"What sport?" cried an enthusiast, arriving breathlessly on the bridge, just as boat and nets were dropping down the stream.

"Haan't had none this week, nor yet laast!" shouted back the head man of the party, grimly.

In fact, we have given up the Christ-church salmon, and have lost faith as to his existence, when, as a net is almost hauled in, there is a sudden and vehement

splash in the water which it encloses. The men pull now with a will, and next moment a fine silvery salmon is pulled bodily out of the water, and trundled up the strand. A beautiful fellow he is, too—a twenty-pounder, at the least—the picture of piscine strength and beauty; and when the shore-hand picks up a big stone and bangs the head of the fish, the crashing sound of the blows inspire a momentary pity for the fate of this gallant gentleman.

But our way is along the coast; and a pleasant path along the edge of the low cliff promises well, and for a mile or so keeps its promise. From the heights the dimpling sea is spread before us, its varied depth, and underlying crust of rock or sand or marly clay, expressed in so many glowing tints. The great white chalk cliffs that form the butt-end of the Isle of Wight come into bolder prominence with the jutting knife-edge of the Needles rocks, and the tall, white lighthouse—the only needle-like thing about the group.

Then the path brings us to a wicket gate, invitingly open, that leads through pleasant grounds and past an unassuming cottage, just such “a cot that o’erlooks the wide sea” that the poet demands for the downhill of life. A curious-looking structure of blackened timber projects from the cliff, and forms a kind of gallery or verandah, with views all round from its cabin windows. For the structure is actually the poop of some big steamer, hurled ashore and left high and dry by the ocean. But at the gate of this little paradise we meet the angel with the flaming sword in the shape of an amiable gardener, who turns us back with the utmost politeness. The cottage—in hushed tones—is a favourite retreat of the Marchioness.

So there is nothing for it but a sort of toboggan slide down the cliff, and a tramp over the shingle. But the view from below has an interest of its own. For about here the character of the cliff changes altogether; sands and gravels are replaced by clayey strata, of a somewhat putty-like consistency, and along the face of the cliff, steeply sloped like a railway cutting, bands of men are at work forming trenches, so it seems, down the slope. It seems a large undertaking, this, to shape the coast of mighty ocean with a spade. But the foreman, on being interrogated, explains that this is done in order to relieve the agricultural land above, where

there is a rich fat soil and plenty of it, from a superabundance of water.

Yet on the whole, what with the shingles and the clay, the walking is a little bit trying. And we see the whole coast line stretched before us with nothing to break its regularity till the eye rests upon the new settlement of Milton-on-Sea, some miles away, with its big, modern hotel shining conspicuously on the pleasant headland. Beyond lies Hurst Castle, a hazy strip almost lost to view against the bold contours of the island opposite. Our business now is to climb the cliff again, and make across the country to the nearest station, to reach our starting-point again.

Another pleasant morning invites a ramble in the opposite direction. But first let us seat ourselves in a sheltered hollow in the cliffs, and reckon up the component parts of the scene that is stretched before us. A long line of hilly coast forms one of the turns of the great, crescent-shaped bay. There is Durlston Head at the extreme point, with its inhospitable bay, and the rugged-looking Peveral Point, and Swanage, with the grey limestone hill behind it. So far the coast is harsh and stern, rock-bound with the hard, oolitic limestones. But the softer bay of Swanage, with its sloping beach and low, red cliffs, suggests the green sand, so called because it is almost always red, and this is followed by a sheer precipice of chalk, which forms the butt-end of the narrow range of downs that stretches across the Isle of Purbeck, cleft at one point by the narrow gorge of Corfe-gate.

The great white cliff on this side corresponds so exactly with the huge chalk buttress of the Isle of Wight—the hard chalk which weathers into layers that almost exactly resemble the courses of masonry, and which is carved by the sea into fantastic points, the Needles on one hand, and detached masses, called Old Harry and Old Harry’s Wife, on the other—that we needs must believe that the chalk range once stretched across from point to point, when perhaps the bay before us was a region of fertile meadows and marshes, inhabited by some unknown race of primeval man. Now the opposing cliffs form the great white gateway of what may be called our pocket Mediterranean, with its gentle tides and genial winter climate. And the eye, after passing the low-lying coast line that opens with the great lagoon known as Poole Harbour, rests upon the brown cliffs of Bournemouth.

Can we hear the band on the pier? Faintly, perhaps, if the breeze blows this way, although Bournemouth Pier is some four miles distant. Anyhow, we can see the steamers putting out on their daily excursions, two of them racing away towards Swanage, and two others bound for some more distant port. On the beach below, the yellow sands are as yet unfurrowed by human footsteps; but all along the margin of the sea are tracks of some little animal, perhaps a weasel which has been busily foraging along the coast during the night, no doubt in search of the shell-fish which may have been thrown up by the tide.

The sea is calm, and now that the steamers are out of sight, there is nothing to attract attention except an old trading brig, which is veering about in the bay waiting for the tide to carry it into Poole Harbour, her dark, well-patched sails forming a welcome relief to the glitter and sparkle of the sea. About half-way to Bournemouth we come to Boscombe Pier, at the mouth of a ravine known as Boscombe Chine, which is now laid out as ornamental grounds, and very tastefully done; nature being not too much interfered with. At the head of the chine we are full into the busy haunts of men. For here are fine shops, and big hotels, and a grand street that leads towards Bournemouth, which street is in appearance an avenue through a pine-forest, the houses being prettily interspersed among the trees. Here you may hail a 'bus as if you were in Piccadilly, or a hansom if you please, and be trundled down to Lanesdown, where are tall houses, hotels, cab-stands, fine streets branching out in various directions, interspersed with open heathery knolls and tufted banks with the ever-green pine always closing the vista. There we are fairly among the shops and marts of Bournemouth, and in the midst of a throng of people, a pleasant, leisurely crowd that is doing its shopping, its chattering, its general loafing, in the happiest spirit of content. A pleasant lounge is the Arcade, with its seats and glittering shops on either hand. If chemists' shops abound, suggesting pills and prescriptions, so also do confectioners, with the daintiest forms of chocolates and confitures.

Then there is the square, with public gardens—miles of them, so it seems on a hasty glance—intersecting it in a very pleasant way; and here is a row of four-horse breaks, which are loading up

for long drives in various directions—round the New Forest; to Wimborne; to Poole; to Dorchester; or where you please. Although early in the season, when other watering-places have hardly yet awakened from their winter's sleep, Bournemouth has already begun to behave as if summer were fairly here. And every sunny day seems to justify the assumption.

Yet a dangerous place is Bournemouth. Drusilla, whose mind in rural solitudes dwells serenely on her surroundings, finds sermons in stones, and revels in pleasant and inexpensive bits of scenery, no sooner is turned loose among the shops decked with all the season's fashions, than she begins to yearn towards bonnets that are lovely, and hats that are chic, and tailor-made gowns, and such-like vanities.

Now we have just "one more river to cross." It is Sunday evening, and from the brow of our Southbourne heights, looking towards the land, there is spread out a fair scene, tinged with a mystic kind of radiance by the declining sun. Softly chime the sweet bells of Christchurch over the river flats, and the noble tower of the old priory church stands out in solemn relief from the dark shadows that cluster about it. The way is through a pleasant lane, arched over with trees, a turn of which brings us to the ferry-house. It is the Wick ferry, where boat and ferryman have waited in the gloaming for those passing to and from old Christchurch. He has ferried over Saxon Thanes and peasants; great Alfred himself may have taken a seat in this boat. Danish chiefs and Vikings, too, perhaps—for the fiercest barbarians spared the harmless, necessary ferryman; cowed monks and black-robed canons have oftentimes crowded thy boat, oh, ferryman; and many fair dames hast thou ferried across, even as now, when the rustle of feminine draperies almost overpowers the gentle murmur of the stream.

From the shady cove the ferry-boat shoots out into the sunlit stream, and we are soon landed on the causeway which leads by a path across the meadows to Christchurch. The soft chime of the bells has been succeeded by the strenuous "ting tong." We are a little late, and the organ has begun to roll out its notes, and the chant of the choir meets us as we enter the sacred building, hallowed by prayers that have ceased not for a thousand years. The grand old Norman arches rise from



their massive piers, illumined by bright gas clusters; shadows rest deeply in the dim aisles among chapels and altar tombs.

Knights, ladies, praying in dumb oratories;

and monuments with tattered banners and rusty helms, half seen in the claustral gloom.

The fine Perpendicular choir is almost shut off from view by a massive rood screen, of mediæval origin, designed to cut off the nave, which formed the parochial church, from the chancel appropriated to the Black Canons. A glance through the open door reveals beautifully-carved stalls and misereres, of the fifteenth and later centuries, and a grand reredos of carved stone, showing the stem of Jesse. But to view the church aright one must visit it by broad daylight. But then we should miss the beautiful effect of coming out through the noble Early English porch into the dim avenue of elms, daylight still hovering in the sky and moonlight mingling with it, while the white tombs rise palely on either hand, with the river, swift and clear from the priory weir, flowing beneath the chancel walls, and the strange old Norman turret, with its interlacing arcades and curious trellis stonework—all this is best seen by such a light as this in all the softness and gloom of hoar antiquity.

### SHAKESPEARE'S SCHOOL.

FEW spots in England have such a deep interest for members of the Anglo-Saxon race as Stratford-on-Avon, the birthplace of their greatest poet. During the summer months the small Midland town is visited by many thousands. Owing partly to increased railway facilities, but chiefly to the spread of education and the consequent wider appreciation of the genius of Shakespeare, the number of pilgrims to this favourite shrine is annually increasing. Upon the pages of the various visitors' books are to be found the names of many famous men and women. We do not wonder at it, for apart from its associations Stratford has many natural advantages. It lies in an undulating valley through whose rich pasture-lands the Avon winds slowly along, and standing out clearly in the landscape is the beautiful spire of Trinity Church, "where sleeps the illustrious dead." But the principal object of the visitor is not to refresh the eye with the beauties of nature.

They are a secondary consideration. He would look upon scenes and places hallowed by their connection with Shakespeare himself. In a manner they are familiar to him already. The birthplace, the church, Ann Hathaway's Cottage, Charlecote Park, Mary Arden's House—all these he feels he must see. He needs no guide-book to tell him of their existence; but unless he is more fortunate than is frequently the case, he will miss the opportunity of visiting one spot which has a distinct claim of its own upon his attention. It is the school in which the poet received his early education. The building stands in the main street of the town, and adjoins the chapel erected by the Guild of the Holy Cross, whose foundation dates from the year 1296. Unfortunately, the outside of the school is deformed by a coat of rough-cast which covers the old oak beams, and gives no promise of the quaint beauty of the interior. The history of the school is closely connected with that of the guild chapel, and is a good illustration of the changes wrought in the condition of ecclesiastical institutions by the Reformation.

It seems probable that the oldest part of the school buildings is a long low room called the Guild Hall. At any rate, we know that in 1482, Thomas Jolyffe, one of the priests, built the Old Latin Schoolroom over it, and endowed the institution with various lands. The hall was probably used for business and judicial purposes by the members of the guild. In Shakespeare's day it was the largest public room, and as such was the scene of dramatic performances. The Earl of Worcester's players visited Stratford in 1569, and this visit was repeated annually for nearly twenty years. The father of the poet held the position of bailiff or mayor in 1571, and doubtless took his son with him to see these rude representations, which must have deeply fired his youthful imagination. On the south wall, hidden by the panelling, is a large fresco of the Crucifixion, in a very battered condition, though a part of the body of the Saviour may be traced, and the face of the Virgin is in a fair state of preservation. Unfortunately a part of this room has been cut off by a partition, and is now occupied by the town authorities. It is satisfactory to learn that they have recently decided to restore it to the school.

At right angles to the Hall is the Armoury, a room with Jacobean panelling, having on the wall over the fireplace a large painting

of the arms of the Kings of England, which, as we learn from the town records, dates from 1660, and points to the public rejoicing at the restoration of the Stuarts. A winding staircase leads to the Council Chamber, which stands over it, and jutting out from this staircase is a very small room, which was used as a Record Room. It seems that the Council Chamber was the meeting-place of the Town Council as successors of the guild, and that papers were placed in the smaller room for convenience. Many of our readers will remember the controversy which, a few years ago, followed the discovery of some documents in the Record Room. The Council Chamber has a splendid oak table, and a most beautiful oak roof whose beauty was until recently hidden by a plaster ceiling. This was removed four years ago, and upon one of the walls frescoes of two roses were discovered—the one red with a white heart, and the other white with a red heart. Stratford came in for more than its full share of the troubles of the Wars of the Roses, and the painting evidently shows the joy of the year 1485, when the struggle was ended for ever by the marriage of Henry the Seventh with Elizabeth of York. In this room there is a library of some size, and on the shelves may be seen the works of several well-known modern writers, presented by them to the school.

The long room which runs over the Guild Hall is divided into two parts, the Mathematical Room and the Old Latin Schoolroom. It is probable that no such distinction existed in the poet's day. Class-rooms are the natural outcome of the many-sided education of modern times.

In the Museum at the Birthplace the visitor is shown a desk taken from this room, which tradition assigns to Shakespeare; but a great deal of its interest has been lost by its removal from the spot where it actually stood in the Old Latin Schoolroom.

The whole of this part of the building is covered with a splendid specimen of the waggon roof, said to be the finest in the kingdom, and in the windows, which are themselves modern, are panes of the old yellow glass. At the end of the Latin Room is a smaller window, of curious shape, which runs into the tower and nave of the Guild Chapel; and from one of the windows is seen a very pretty nook formed by that building and one of the school-houses, which stands on the site of the

dwelling of the priests of the Guild of the Holy Cross.

The whole of the guild property—including that of the chapel and of the school—was confiscated by Henry the Eighth; but, on a petition from the inhabitants, it was restored to the town by Edward the Sixth, on condition that a grant was paid annually for the maintenance of the school. This is the origin of its present name of King Edward the Sixth's School, the name of the priest-founder being almost lost in that of the King. No such provision was made for the Guild Chapel; it is, therefore, penniless, and its present condition would scarcely give any countenance to the advocates for ecclesiastical disendowment. Unless some effective steps are speedily taken, this ancient building will become a ruin. The incumbent is the head-master of the school, and the services are conducted by him and by one of the assistant masters, who is in holy orders. There is no cure of souls, and the entire income, derived from pew rents, is considerably less than one hundred pounds a year. The building is used on special occasions as a school chapel.

But to return to our subject. One would be interested to know something of the man to whose lot it fell to plant the first seeds of knowledge in the mind of Shakespeare. By consulting the records of the town, we find that there were three who may have shared this distinction. Curiously enough, one of them, if the name of Jenkins is to be taken as a proof, was a Welshman. It is possible that he may have stood for the character of Sir Hugh Evans. We know how easily schoolboys are impressed by their master's peculiarities, whether they be those of accent or of manner. It is noteworthy, too, that Jenkins was very unpopular, as in the year 1579 a sum of money was paid him by the authorities, on condition that he resigned his post as head-master. Professor Baynes has shown that Ben Jonson's famous saying, that Shakespeare had little Latin and less Greek, is hardly a fair statement of the real facts of the case. A critical examination of the poet's works will prove that he had an acquaintance with classical literature such as would be possessed by a man who had been trained at a school like the old Stratford Grammar School. We must not expect from him nice scholarship or a strict attention to details. Knowledge is simply relative, and

Ben Jonson's standard was undoubtedly a high one. He would naturally look with contempt upon the classical attainments of one who had received such an education as Shakespeare had; but we are justified in coming to the conclusion that the poet could read Latin fluently and fairly, and that any author he cared for he would be able to read for his pleasure and information.

That the instruction in Latin was thorough is proved by a letter preserved by Malone written in that language, in 1598, by the son of R. Quiney to his father, then staying in London. It is a very creditable performance for a boy of eleven. This Richard Quiney, one of the Aldermen of Stratford in Shakespeare's day, who had certainly been brought up at the school—for his family had been long established in the town—was so well acquainted with Latin, that his brother-in-law, Abraham Starley, in writing to him, frequently made use of long Latin sentences and paragraphs.

The advantages which King Edward the Sixth's School conferred upon its scholars in the poet's time have certainly not been lessened by the growth of centuries, and by their extension to others than the sons of burgesses. An increase in the number of pupils has brought with it an improvement in the quality of the education, and a corresponding wideness in the subjects taught. The institution has passed through many vicissitudes, but its present condition is one which must be very gratifying to all those who are interested in its welfare. Successes of a high order have proved that the wish of the pious founder is being conscientiously and scrupulously carried out. Stratford may well be proud of its school, for here to-day we find a large staff of masters, a thorough organisation, and an effective training for nearly every department in life; in a word, the machinery and routine of an English public school. Pupils are trained not only for business life, but also for the Civil Service, the Universities, the Army, and the various competitive examinations. The institution, too, has its scholarships and exhibitions, one of which has been founded to commemorate in the school itself the memory of its greatest alumnus.

In this old-world scene, the minds of those who in a special manner look upon the poet as their own are being equipped to fight the battle of modern life.

## A GARRISON ROMANCE.

By MRS. LEITH ADAMS (MRS. LAFFAN).

Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," etc.

### CHAPTER XI. A NOBLE HEART.

WHEN Mabel Graham had made a finish of writing and sealing that letter to Captain Rowan, she put her hands up to her throat as if she were stifling; her breath came and went with an audible sound; her eyes were strained and staring, yet saw nothing. She would have given worlds for the relief of tears; the softening of the burning pain that seemed to scorch her brain and deaden her powers of thought and self-possession.

What was she not giving up?

The wisdom and tenderness of a true-hearted man that should have been her guide and support through life; the passion and the joy of a love that had come into her life and filled it with a perfect music—even that "sound of violins" which turns earth to paradise as we listen. Was that last kiss—the very memory of which thrilled her through and through—to be in truth the last? Was she to live and die, knowing such sweetness never more? Was she never to feel the clasp of her lover's strong, enfolding arm; and oh! worse torment of it all, never to have the right to take her stand beside him in the hour of pain or sickness—In the day of trial or of sorrow? Was she never to be able to comfort him; never to be able to help him; never to make the brightness of his life; to anticipate his every wish; to enfold him about with her loving care? These were the dreams that she had dreamt—dreams born to die in the dreaming. These were the fair castles in the air which she had built, doomed for ever to be but cloud towers indeed, "by ghostly masons wrought"—things of nought—shadows that should die away into nothingness. There was a photograph—a poor thing at best, being the work of a very young amateur, who was in the habit of presenting his friends with portraits of themselves in every stage of defective focus, yet, by chance, a happy likeness of Charley Rowan; a likeness that spoke to you as you looked at it. The dark eyes looked at you with a gleam of fun in them; a smile lurked under the shadow of the drooping moustache; the noble line of the brow, well displayed by

the short-cropped locks, which yet would not have all the curl clipped out of them, but showed a ripple like that you may see in the sand when the little waves have kissed it; the grand, square shoulders; the neck so finely supporting the gracious head; a cricket blazer, striped green and black, the colours of the Brigade; a carelessly-knotted tie; a cunning cap to match both held lightly in one hand.

Such was the picture upon which, with burning eyes, gazed poor sweet Mabel. The laughing eyes, the dawning smile seemed to say, "What are you so sad about, little sweetheart—little sweetheart, all my own?" And what wonder that, as she gazed, the anguish grew well nigh unendurable, and her hand strayed towards the letter, lying face-downwards, as if ashamed to show itself, ready addressed and sealed?

It was a moment of supreme conflict; but Polly's face, tear-stained and yet brave, came up before her mind; Polly's voice, tremulous yet yearning, sounded in her ears.

"There's the childer to think of—the childer to think of," she sobbed. Such sobs, hard and dry, without a tear to soften them! "I am glad you taught me that, Polly—glad that you taught me that." Then came a wailing cry, "Papa—papa, oh, papa!"

For a moment thoughts which at a calmer moment she might have denounced as disloyal, cowardly, even shameful, came surging through the girl's brain. The whole life of the man they all delighted to honour was shown to her, as a drowning man is said to see his own past in one fleeting instant—what that man's life was; what it might have been; the ceaseless uncertainties; the endless anxieties; the tears and watchings; the wild unrest. . . .

Then arose the beautiful family tradition, the creed of an absolute, unquestioning devotion to the head of the household; the memory of his charm, his tenderness, and his snatches of melody.

The divinerage of self-immolation entered into and possessed the girl's heart; the same passion that in the olden time enabled delicate women to face martyrdom for a cause and creed divine, enfolded her in its pure white flame.

Ten minutes later, and the fateful letter was on its way to the Fort where the Rifle Brigade lay.

But might not the boatman to whose care she entrusted it have chosen any

other song than that to croon, as he crossed the sunlit bay?

Ahimé—Ahimé—ma 'mie-é-é!

Mabel never doubted her lover's loyalty to her behest. She had besought him not to seek her out, not to appeal against the verdict pronounced upon him. He would let her have her way. The light of gladness would die out from the dear, dark eyes she loved; no tender smile would part the lips whose touch upon her own had given her her first lesson in the thrill and sweetness of passion; but her lover would meet the inevitable with a true man's courage, and he would know that it was the inevitable, because nothing less could have driven his "little sweetheart" to seal his doom of banishment.

The Major was very wily, and very wise in his dealings with his feminine belongings. He did not rush them into snares and pitfalls; rather did he let them down gently. He was even sorry for them when they had to suffer. He had a subtle consciousness of the existence of what he described to himself as a "sympathetic understanding" between his step-daughter and Captain Rowan. He admired Captain Rowan—admired him very much indeed. It has been said that Major Clutterbuck was a fine soldier, a man whose large and genial presence, and air of calm audacity, impressed the men under his command. To be a fine soldier is to know a fine soldier. The Major prophesied great things of young Rowan, if he got a "show."

"Let him get a chance to smell powder, and if he isn't cut down, he'll be heard of in despatches," he would say, with dignified approval. "He's about as good as they make them."

Indeed, there could be no manner of doubt that if Charley Rowan had only stood in the shoes of Amphlett Jones; if the former had been a millionaire, and able and willing to give that "leg-up" to a man in (temporary) difficulties, which the latter had so readily conceded, Mabel's stepfather would have rejoiced with an exceeding great joy and would have been conscious of a real happiness, a quite affecting amount of it, in fact, in giving the girl to the man she loved. His artistic intuitions would have been gratified by the evident suitability of the one to the other; his artistic eye would have been gratified by the spectacle of their beautiful young love, the picture of their innocent joy.



He would have descanted upon it, not disdaining to let a "manly tear" gather in the said eye as he looked upon them. As it was—

Well, young Rowan did not stand in the broad, substantial shoes of Mr. Jones; therefore the dark-eyed lover must go to the wall. In his heart of hearts the Major was convinced that Mabel would find a certain consolation in the sustaining consciousness that this sacrifice was being made for him—and also for the "youngsters." It may also in fairness be said that these last-named stood for a good deal in the Major's estimation of Mabel's possible sources of comfort. He was very tender over her; full of small caresses and little thoughtfulnesses, so that the girl was almost ready to be remorseful for the anguish she felt in giving up her lover for his sake. Between mother and daughter there were no confidences. There was a passionate clinging to each other now and again—the pallor of the mother's face, the appealing sadness of her sunken eyes, told of infinite sorrow and suffering—but the "safe secret" was still shared only by Mabel and Jim. Mabel was not one to do things by halves. If she told her mother of that sweet hour of mutual love and confidence—that first thrilling chord of a harmony that was doomed to die away even in the hour of its birth—how would not that mother grieve! Surely her pain would be added to, even tenfold; for a woman alone could gauge the sacrifice of such hopes, the renunciation of all that makes a woman's life most full and complete, and without which it can but be a stunted thing at best.

The struggle once over—the fatal letter sent on its errand of pain—the inevitable reaction followed.

"Papa," said the girl, white and trembling—"I cannot see . . . Mr. Jones . . . to-day."

Not an irritable word did the Major say in reply, though even at that moment it was more than probable Mr. Jones was on his way across the bay.

"My little girl—you are quite upset," said the Major, with tender, grave concern, "that painful interview with poor Polly has been too much for you; go and lie down in your room, and keep quiet. I will make it all right with our good friend."

So Mabel lay down in the quiet, darkened room, where you could hear the murmuring sob of the sea against the stones—lay down and turned her face to the wall, like

the sick prophet of old, dressing her weird as best, or as ill, as she might.

Surely some one was stabbing her temples with cruel knives—some fever-demon had hold of her soft palms that they should burn so hot and dry? The "scramble" were in an agony.

King Baby had to be wildly assured by each member of the family in turn that sister Mabel was not going to be "put in a box," the gloomy and premature conclusion he looked upon as the natural result of her being ill, and not able to devote herself to him as usual.

The rest of the "scramble" spoke to him one by one, they spoke to him altogether; even Bertie's gentle consolations failed. One of his "officers," one he dearly loved, had been ill and couldn't play any more, and then they had put him "in a box," and played the drums, and Phil had seen him no more. It was evident to his youthful mind that Mabel had entered upon the first stage of this mournful process, and, to the horror of his family, King Baby abased himself full length—it wasn't much of a length—upon the floor, face-downwards. They hauled him up into Lily's lap at last, and there he cried himself to sleep; the little girl—fully imbued with the traditions of family devotion—sitting as still as a statue, with the golden head upon her shoulder, while Bertie wielded a vast palm-leaf to keep the flies away from the Royal sleeper.

But Jim, divesting himself of his shoes, stole a tip-toe to the door of Mabel's room, with a little pillow under his arm, put it down, patted it straight, and then lay down like a little watch-dog. No one should come and "urstart" sister Mabel if he could help it.

Presently he thought he heard her weeping; but perhaps that was only fancy. Anyway, he had a tough tussle with himself, and was obliged to call most vividly to mind "Mothie's" strict injunction that no one—not even Phil—should go into the room.

He was quick to catch the sound of the voice of Mr. Jones below, and slipped down the stairs as silent and swift as a monkey down a tree, giving that gentleman quite a start.

"You can't see Mabel, not if you want ever so," he said, standing there shoeless and ruffle-headed; "she's got quite upset. No one can't go in—not even Phil"—this, of course, was the last extremity of disability to receive visitors.

"She's resting. And I rather think—but I'm not quite sure—that I heard her . . ."

But at this point Jim was, as it were, swept away out of knowledge, and there stood the Major, smiling and radiant, begging Mr. Jones to step into his "little room."

It will be conceived that, to tell of all this attention to his sick sister on Master Jim's part, has necessitated putting the clock back somewhat; and that in the admirable frame of mind here depicted, he had no slightest foreshadowing of the sad falling into temptation that was to come about next day—the visit to "old Bogles," to the hotel, and the solemn and silent homeward voyage to follow.

When the stabbing pain had ceased, leaving her only white and weak, and with dark shadows round her eyes, Mabel reasoned with Jim as to the iniquity of his proceedings; but the fact that old Bogles had made himself very pleasant, and that Mr. Jones had been deeply interested in the story of Polly and the baby, apparently stood in the way of any deeply penitential feeling on the part of the sinner. He looked on his misdoing as a success; why then grieve?

The delight of the children in having sister Mabel once more amongst them was so great, that a person less devoted to them might have found it oppressive. They followed her, in a body, from post to pillar. Phil twined himself about her like a parasite about a slender young tree. It was too delightful that sister was not to be put in a box, and have the drums played over her, like that "off'cer" of his—"poor chap!"—who had disappeared in that uncanny fashion, and never come any more to cut little baskets out of cherry-stones for Master Phil, as had been his wont.

"Did I tell you we saw Dr. Halkett and Cap'n Rowan at the steps?" said Jim. "Oh yes, we did"—here he nodded his head many times. "And, Mabel, he looked very sad and sorry; he did, indeed. Do you think—Oh, Mabel"—this in a sudden alarm—"are you going to be ill, and shut in a dark room again? Why do you do like that?"

For Mabel had covered her eyes with her two hands, and was swaying herself to and fro.

"Don't be frightened, Jim, don't mind," she said, at last, gasping out the words, so that Jim's stubbly hair felt like to stand

on end. "I shall be all right in a minute."

The boy flung his arms around her, soothing and caressing her as if he were a grown man, but keeping silence, lest with more words he should make her look like that again. She gave a quick, indrawn breath as Mrs. Clutterbuck came in, and said, in a strained and faltering voice:

"Mr. Jones is here, Mabel. Papa says will you go down."

Then her courage, lost awhile, came to her again. She kissed her mother, told Jim to go out into the summer-house at the end of the garden, and keep the others there, too—all this in her best, must-not-be-disobeyed manner, to which Jim immediately succumbed—and went slowly and deliberately down the stairs.

At the foot stood the Major, just a thought nervous, but very much on the spot, for all that; and through the open door of the sitting-room loomed the substantial figure of Amphetlett Jones.

Certainly the Honourable Bob could not well have grumbled at the ship-owner for being "too pink" on the present occasion; but, despite his pallor, there was a glad light in his eyes, and something noble and dignified in his whole bearing. If a passion of tenderness was beating in his heart, its outward expression was carefully restrained, and his manner to the gentle girl before him as reverential and refined as that of any knight of old to his "faire ladye."

He retained the hand she gave him in greeting, and led her to a seat by the window, placing himself beside her. The door had closed as if by magic, softly and without noise. They two were alone in the dim, scented light.

Mr. Jones still held Mabel's hand, and she did not try to withdraw it. Why, indeed, should she, seeing that it was to be his for life—that its resting-place would be there in weal and woe? It was no use to let herself shrink at the very beginning of her task.

"Your father has told you, has expressed to you my wishes, my—I am bound to say—daring hopes, Miss Graham, has he not?" said Mr. Jones, conscious that the hand that held the girl's slim fingers was beginning to tremble in spite of his efforts after coolness.

"Yes," said Mabel, simply; "he told me about it two days ago."

"He cannot, however, have expressed to you the hesitation, the timidity, with

which I spoke; the sense of presumption that is upon me now. I am really puzzled to know how I ever came to summon up courage to speak at all, I really am," said Mr. Jones, with a little smile—rallying himself, as it were—which had something pathetic in it, and touched Mabel to the quick. "I feel so unworthy to plead for your regard, so—if I may be permitted to word it in that way—so unsuitable, and yet, I am sure, very sure, that no one—I really feel very bold to assert myself on this point—no one could appreciate you more highly than I do, or"—here he drew a long breath—"love you more dearly."

The fingers he held grew sensibly colder, and he thought it better to release them.

"You are not vexing over what I say?" he said, tenderly. "I would not have you vex over anything for the world—I would not indeed. But the very fact that you have condescended—for, indeed, I feel it to be that—condescended to see me here and now, seems to give me a right to speak out what is in my heart."

"It is very good of you to care for me so much, to wish to help those belonging to me for my sake," said Mabel, her voice low, even, passionless, but very, very gentle; "I have done nothing to deserve it. But I will try—I will always try to make—you—happy—indeed I will."

"Then I may take it that you consent to my suit; that you promise to become—my wife?"

The last word was difficult to get out, it nearly choked him. She had seemed to him as far out of his reach as one of the stars that gemmed the purple sky; and now here she was beside him—his own, not another's, but his very own.

"I am not so foolish, my—my dear child"—he hesitated a moment over this, as fearing she might think it too familiar; but the gentle face was still turned towards him, the lips a little parted, the eyes quiet and not unkindly—"as to expect too much at first. At my age, and in my position—a position so different to that of those among whom your lot has been cast—I should be foolish to look for any—well, any romance on your part. All I hope for is this—I hope, some day, to win your tenderness by the love and care given to you day by day, and year by year."

At the words "year by year," a little shiver coursed through the girl's veins. They called up before her mind a very different picture to the one drawn by Mr.

Jones. They suggested the vista of the years to be—years in which she should never meet the dark fond eyes of Charley Rowan; never hear his voice; never feel the touch of his dear lips on hers and the clasp of his strong and loving arms. But the mood of weakness passed.

"Am I turning coward so soon?" she said to herself, and rent her thoughts from the dear, dead past.

"You will be always good to me, I am sure," she said, smiling a weary little smile, that yet seemed to the man beside her as the glow of the blinding sunshine; and then, of her own free will and deed, she laid her hand once more in that of Amphlett Jones.

The man was stirred to the very centre of his being. He would have clasped her in his arms, and drawn her dear head upon his breast had he given way to the impulse of his heart, but something, intangible yet irresistible, held him back; some subtle instinct warned him that he would lose more than he would gain by precipitancy.

"Will you let me tell you," he said, speaking with a fond timidity that again touched her deeply, "how it has been with me, ever since I met you—nay, before I met you—for—do you know, dear, I fell in love with your picture? I did, indeed. . . . You see I have lived among ledgers, and goods, and hard business interests all my life—and so you came upon me as a sort of surprise. I had never imagined—never dreamed—that the world held anything like you—indeed, imagination and dreaming have had but little place in my life, as you may suppose. It has all been stern reality with me. Dodson, my chief manager, you know, and I have been like a couple of old fossils digging away in a sort of underground existence; but now the sun of happiness is shining very brightly for me—so brightly that it almost dazzles me—"

Even as he spoke Amphlett Jones was unable to refrain from wondering to himself what would be the said Dodson's expression of countenance if he could hear his chief talking in such a strain, or catch sight of that fair girl in the filmy, smoke-coloured gown with pliant waist begirt by a silver belt—what—oh what indeed? . . .

Shade of Dodson, with lined face, pen behind your ear, lank and grizzled locks, and respectable coat of broadcloth for Sunday wear, answer if you can! But

Mabel listened very quietly. A great deal of what Mr. Jones said was rather like Greek to her; and she was quite incapable of grasping the personality of the man Dodson. But she felt, with every intuition of her nature, that the man beside her was good and true, that it behoved her now, and in the future, to be good and true to him. She recognised his nobility of heart, and did homage to it, and she rested on the thought that her father and the children would be in good and safe hands, and no sense of obligation ever pressed home to any one—recognised in a word that however truly Mr. Jones, in certain lights, might socially be rightly described as an "outsider," at heart he was as true a gentleman, as pure and generous a man as Sir Galahad himself.

"I do not want to keep you long to-day," said Mr. Jones, after a while; "you have not been well; you want more—what is it Jim calls it?—'restering.' But we shall have many things to talk over together, shan't we? I want you to think things out, and tell me just what will be best for us to do—I mean for the boys; and all that sort of thing."

The delicacy that associated her from the first with all his own magnanimity was not lost upon Mabel. "We" were to talk things over; "we" were to do this and that for the boys. It was prettily put.

"I may come again to-morrow!" said Mr. Jones, simply.

"Are you going to leave us, then, this evening?"

The very hint that she might wish him to remain brought the blood to his brow; but, as a matter of fact, she had spoken more as a natural rejoinder than with any personal motive. Still, no one will find in their hearts to grudge the good man the gleam of satisfaction her words conveyed.

"I should have been delighted—you must have known that," he said, flushed and smiling; "nothing could have made me happier. But I did not know, you see; our places were a little altered, were they not, in consequence of your being ill; and I made an engagement to dine with our good friend, the Honourable Mr. Dacre. Otherwise——"

It was a tiny jar to hear him give the Honourable Bob his full title when speaking of him formally; but the look and the smile that accompanied that word "otherwise" would have salved over a greater social slip.

"I should like to see Mrs. Clutterbuck before I go."

The suggestion made Mabel wince a moment; but she recovered herself quickly. Of course he must see "mothie." Had he not the right? She rose to her feet, and Mr. Jones rose, too. They stood side by side.

What a contrast!

She, with her delicate youth, her slender grace, he—well, well, there seemed to be some truth under the fear of Amphlett Jones that he was "unsuitable" to mate with the fair girl at his side; and it may be feared with regard to Dodson, that a long and flawlessly respectable life would have been marred by the utterance of some truly awful expression had his bleared eyes beheld the pair.

"I will go and tell mamma," said Mabel.

Suddenly there had come over her that strange feeling we are all conscious of at times—the feeling that the whole circumstances around and about us are but the replica of what has happened before.

It was no surprise to her when Amphlett Jones just touched her hand with a soft and lingering kiss, and said, so earnestly, that his voice shook, and well-nigh broke:

"Heaven bless you—my—my dear!"

No surprise, either, to hear herself say, in reply:

"And you, too."

Nor yet to see the sudden flash of a great joy light up in his eyes at the words.

Nevertheless, her strength had been more tried by the interview than she knew, for she was hardly able to drag herself upstairs, and her breath seemed to fail her as she gained her mother's room.

"He was very good to me," she said, "very, very good to me." Then, with a sudden, passionate gesture, she cried out: "But, mothie, mothie, if he had kissed me, I should have died!"

#### NOTE.

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